

This week's PODD communication focus...

Initiating Communication: “Hey, I’ve got something to say”

“Children who have complex challenges (physical, sensory, cognitive and/or language), generally require additional time to initiate communication. The time required to organise their body and move, process the input and generate a message can result in children missing the opportunity to initiate a turn in fast moving conversations...Children may need to be taught a method to initiate communication and partners taught to provide time, observe for, and respond to these initiations.” (Porter, 2007, p. 65)

- In order for your child to learn a clear method for initiating communication, they need to be exposed to this through modelling, in much the same way as you model the language in their PODD.
- You can model initiating communication and your need for the PODD by choosing a method that your child can learn. This may be:
 - Waving your arm (preferably looking at your wristband that says “I’ve got something to say”) and vocalising or saying “Hey, I’ve got something to say.”
 - Looking at your wristband that says ‘I’ve got something to say’ and looking back at your child, verbally referencing what you are doing by saying “I’m looking at my wristband and I’m looking back at you. I’ve got something to say.”
 - Pressing a voice output switch that says “Hey, I’ve got something to say”
 - Looking at the PODD communication book and looking back at your child, verbally referencing this by saying, “I’m looking at your book and I’m looking back at you. I’ve got something to say.”
 - Reaching for or tapping the PODD.
- There may be times when one method is more appropriate or efficient than others so you may need to model a variety of ways to initiate communication.

This week, focus on using a consistent method of initiating communication every time you model using your child’s PODD. Now that you are confident with commenting and giving opinions through ‘I like this/I don’t like this/I think it’s’, try adding, “I’m waving my arm/wristband. I’m calling out – Hey, I’ve got something to say”, prior to modelling your message.

“A child’s opportunities to communicate may be further limited by...limited expectations that the child can, or will, communicate.” (Porter, 2007, p. 65)

- Remember to be sensitive to your child’s very subtle initiations of communication. For some children, this may be stilling, looking, vocalising, or particular body movements. By responding to your child and presenting their PODD when they show even the slightest indication that they may have something to say, you are teaching them that they can initiate communication and that people around them expect them to communicate and will respond to them.
- For example, you may say “You’re looking at me, do you have something to say?”, or “You’re waving your arm, do you have something to say?” and offer your child their PODD. If your child does not respond or indicates ‘no’, this is ok too – you can acknowledge it by saying, “No, you don’t have anything to say”, and you have still provided yet another learning opportunity for them.